



Within The Circle: Book 1

Truth of
Fire

Abby Wood

B&P

Truth of Fire

by Abby Wood

Breathless Press
Calgary, Alberta
www.breathlesspress.com

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously and are not to be construed as real. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, organizations, or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

Truth of Fire: Book One of Within the Circle
Copyright© 2010 Abby Wood

ISBN: 978-1-926771-75-5

Cover Artist: Justyn Perry

Editor: Sandra Rychel

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be used or reproduced electronically or in print without written permission, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in reviews.

Breathless Press

www.breathlesspress.com

CHAPTER ONE

"Thrice around the circle's edge, we're protected by your might.
Oh gracious Goddess, watch over all three of us day and night."

Carly hopped out of the circle of stones and flung back the hood of her cape. "Do you think it will work?"

"Carly!" Her sister Bonnie slapped her upper arm. "Shit. Why do you always have to question the Goddess?" Bonnie turned toward the oldest Jacobson triplet. "Alexis?"

The eldest sister, gifted with the element of air, held up her hand. "Please, you two, let me finish."

Casting her gaze toward the sky, Carly sighed. She raised her hood and stepped back within the sacred circle. *Oh Goddess, give me strength.*

With her arms raised, her palms open to the night, Alexis closed her eyes and finished the spell.

*"Oh Goddess of air,
We ask that you be fair.
Use your love and speed
To give us our every need.
Make us strong and bold.
Please bring us a man to hold
Upon this Hallows Eve
To her...to her...to me.
Blessed be!"*

The wind picked up around the clearing and whipped Carly's robe open. She hugged her waist and never took her gaze off Alexis. Her sister's hood had come off, and her blonde curly hair, which matched Carly's own, took on a life of its own.

Alexis lowered her arms and opened her eyes. The wind disappeared, and peacefulness settled over the siblings. Carly rushed forward along with Bonnie to support Alexis. Calling upon the elements often drained them, but the wind always seemed especially strong.

"It is done." Alexis put her arms around each of her sisters. "Are you two ready? We've only given the Goddesses one week to do a big job."

Bonnie snorted. "Are you kidding? I think I've waited a lifetime for this moment. I can't believe the time has come and I will find the right man to love."

Carly groaned. "I can't even look at a man without turning several shades of red. I don't see how this will work. You two are much better at relationships than I am."

Alexis laughed. "Oh dear sister, it will work. You'll see soon enough that the Goddesses always know what they are doing." She winked at Bonnie. "Besides, the powers that be know that they'll have to give you a little extra help along the way."

Carly glanced back and forth between them. "What aren't you telling me? You did something, didn't you?" She narrowed her eyes. "Come on, spill..."

Alexis grinned. "Get ready, dear sister, because you'll be the first Jacobson sister to find true love."

CHAPTER TWO

As the antique grandfather clock finished its seventh round of *dongs*, Carly laid down her hairbrush and headed toward the front door. *Ugh, why did I have to pick today of all days to oversleep?*

With only a week to go until the end of October, she'd have to work fast to prep the flowers for the haunting celebration the townspeople threw every Halloween and to arrange the cornstalks that were stored in the back of the shop. No one ever thought the floral business stayed busy this time of year, but people still ordered flowers and decorated their homes for trick-or-treaters.

After grabbing her sweatshirt off the coat rack, she slipped it over her head and ran her fingers through all her curls. If she hurried, she'd arrive at the flower shop before the boss noticed she overslept.

A fine mist lay heavy over the quaint little coastal town of Lindbergh, Oregon. She loved this time of year, when the leaves fell and the skies stayed darker. Carly jogged across the one street that ran through the center of town and flew in the front door of Rose's Emporium.

"Carly!"

She stumbled to a stop, raised her gaze, and lost all ability to speak.

Standing beside Paul, her supervisor, was the best-looking man she'd ever seen. She caught her lip behind her top teeth. *Oh, please tell me you are quitting and this man is here to take over your job.*

"Come here and meet the owner of Rose's." Paul motioned her over.

Owner? This is Mr. Cortega? Neither of them had ever met the person who owned the company. In her mind, she'd pictured someone old, rich, and vacationing in Mexico—not this hunk of goodness.

The man flashed a smile and dipped his dimpled chin in her direction. A surge of confidence came over her, and she glided over with her hand held out. "I-It's nice to meet you, Mr. —"

"Please, call me Max." His hand swallowed her much smaller one. "What lovely hair you have. I don't believe I have ever seen curls quite that long before." He held her hand up above her head, and without letting go, strolled all the way around her. "I think you must be the most beautiful woman I have ever seen."

Carly giggled. "Oh, well...th-thank you."

"Mr. Cortega, Carly is our floral designer. She's made quite a name for herself in Lindbergh for creating wedding and event arrangements." Paul rocked back on his heels. "In fact, she's got a big order for this Halloween that we—"

"Paul, I'd like to give you the day off. I'll handle the orders today. I'd like to get behind the scenes and find out for myself how efficiently things are run here." Max might have spoken to her manager, but his gaze never left her face.

"But, Mr. —"

"Go ahead, Paul. You deserve some R and R. If I have any problems, I'm sure Carly is quite capable of helping me." Max's thumb strummed the top of her hand. "Isn't that right, sweetheart?"

She nodded. "I'll help him, Paul. You can go ahead and take the day off."

Paul cleared his throat. "Yes, sir. Thank you, sir."

The bell on the door jingled and then fell silent. She licked her lips. Max's dark brown shoulder-length hair begged her to run her hands through it and bring his lips down to her level. *Where are all these thoughts coming from?*

"W-well, I better get busy. The black carnations came in yesterday afternoon. I need to cut and have them ready by the weekend." She

stepped around him, paused, and frowned. An incredible urge to turn around and stay beside him came out of nowhere.

Forcing her feet to move across the floor, she pushed through the swinging door into the back workroom. She reached out and grabbed on to the table to steady herself. Her whole body shook with uncontrolled lust for her boss. *What is going on?*

"Carly?"

She whirled around. "Y-yes?" *Oh sweetness...it's him! What is he doing to me?*

Max stepped closer. She inhaled a long, slow breath. Even through the floral scents permeating the room, the musky aroma coming from him floated across to her and caused her stomach to flip-flop.

"You are unbelievably gorgeous." He ran his hand down her cheek.

She tilted her head into his touch. *Oh Goddess, you did it. You brought me someone who cannot deny me and will love me forever.*

"S-so are y-you." She squeezed her eyes shut, opened them, and wrinkled her nose. "I-I mean..."

"Sh. I know. You have been here the whole time working in my shop, and I had no idea..." He brought his other hand up and cupped her cheeks. "I've never had anything like this come over me, but I can't seem to fight it."

She swallowed. "I know."

He placed feather-soft kisses on her forehead. She shivered despite the way her body warmed under his attention. Any attempt to slow down and try to comprehend what was happening fled her mind the second he lowered his head for a kiss.

Softly he explored her mouth. Brushing his lips against hers, he coaxed her body into submitting. She mewed. The thought of his weight on top of her, his body pleasuring, consuming her, drove her wild. She wanted to experience it all.

He tasted, teased, and nibbled. She dug her fingers into the long strands of hair at his nape. Her pussy dampened, and she held him tighter to her, urging him for more.

Max pulled back without letting her go. "I want you. I need to feel your body against me."

Her hand slipped out of his hair, slid down his shoulder, and fell to her side. This wasn't what she wanted. The spell was for true love, not lust, not something...fake.

"S-stop." She lowered her head, trying to catch her breath.

"What's wrong, sweetheart?" He enfolded her in his arms. The proof of his desire pressed against her lower stomach, making this more difficult.

"I... This isn't what I wanted." She sniffed. *I want love.*

He stepped back and tilted his head to the side. "I don't understand." Sliding his fingers down her arm, he then gathered her hand up in his and placed it flat against his chest. "Can you feel that?"

His heart raced against her palm. She sucked in a breath. Everything seemed too perfect. Her body hummed in response. "I-I'm scared."

"Carly, there is nothing to be afraid of... I would never hurt you. I want to know everything about you, to please you, and love you."

She flinched. "Oh Max, I can't. I've made a terrible mistake. I-I'm s-sorry..." Carly shook her head. "I'm sorry. This is all a big mistake. I need to leave..."

"What about working with me today?" Max stepped over and ran his hand down her back.

She jumped away from his touch and stepped backward toward the door. "I-I've got to go home." Turning, she pushed through the door, ran through the main shop, and out of the building.

She stopped on the sidewalk, leaned over, and put her hands on her knees, fighting the sobs building up inside her chest. Wiping the tears off her cheeks, she turned toward her family's house down the street and headed home. *Oh Goddess, what have I done?*

CHAPTER THREE

Alexis pulled Carly's arm and forced her to follow her out into the living room. Carly stuck out her lower lip and blew the hair out of her eyes. *Don't my sisters understand that I want to forget about what happened?*

"Oh good, you got her to come out." Bonnie stood up and rushed over to hug Carly.

Carly rolled her eyes but leaned her head against her sister's shoulder. "She gave me no choice."

Alexis chuckled. "We had a feeling you'd fight the spell. You've always been the most stubborn of all of us. We let you have most of the day to hole up in your bedroom, but now it is time to tell us what happened that made you come home so upset."

Carly flopped down on the corner of the couch and pulled the throw blanket off the back to cover her legs. "The spell worked—"

"Of course it did. You'd think twenty-five years' worth of working with the elements would teach you that spells always work." Alexis

shook her head. "Why did that upset you? It's what we all wanted. We've thought about it all year. It wasn't something we dreamed up on the spur of the moment."

"I was going to say, the spell worked, but it is not true love. He only wanted me—wanted sex with me—because he had no choice. The Goddesses made him want me." She sniffed and rubbed her eyes. "It's not enough. I want love...genuine love like our parents had."

Bonnie scooted over on the couch. "Listen to you. When has the Goddess ever let you down? Hmm?"

"Today." She leaned over and wrapped her arms around Bonnie's waist. "Max kept saying such lovely things to me. He made me feel so special, and I wanted to believe him..."

Alexis stood up and moved over to the altar.

"What are you doing?" Bonnie asked.

Carly raised her head and frowned. She wasn't in any mood to have a ceremony tonight. In fact, she wanted to go back to bed, pull the covers over her head, and forget she ever met the dashing and mysterious Max.

"Come, sisters." Alexis carried a white bowl filled with water to the small table in the middle of the living room. She set a tapered white candle in the water and pushed it into the stand at the bottom of the ceremonial basin. The wick stood one inch above the liquid. "There is one way to prove that love is real."

"Nuh-uh." Carly shook her head and crossed her arms. "I told you I don't want to do this anymore. I just need a few days to get over this. You guys didn't see him. He's...never mind. I've got to forget about him."

Bonnie pulled her off the couch. "Come on, we'll help you figure this out. Now, kneel down." She whipped off the blanket and pushed Carly to the floor.

All three sisters circled the round table. Alexis held the matchbook out to Carly. She took it and frowned. *It would be nice to know if Max had even a little bit of feelings for me...*

"Ask to see the truth and only the truth." Alexis reached for Bonnie's hand.

Carly inhaled deeply and let it out slowly. Closing her eyes, she swallowed.

"Goddess, here I kneel.

I seek the truth and nothing more."

She opened her eyes and glanced around the table. "I-I can't do this."

"Light the candle, Carly. We will help you." Alexis smiled tenderly.

She opened the matchbook and struck a match, then lit the candle and reached for both of her sisters' hands. "OK, I'm ready."

All three closed their eyes and tilted their heads back. As one voice, they spoke.

"Goddess, here we kneel
And become the power of three.
Show Carly what she cannot see.
Bless her, Goddess, so she may learn.
We'll let the fire burn."

Carly opened her eyes and gazed down at the flame. Warmth emanated from her body. The fire grew taller, brighter, and burned faster the more strongly her power took control.

She sat up straighter as the elemental fire reached full strength inside her heart. A vision of Max tearing apart flowers and knocking them to the floor flashed in her head. The tender way he stroked her hand and showed her how beautiful she was through his eyes was something she couldn't shake.

Her heart's rapid beat matched that of Max's earlier, and in the flame, she watched the way he had laid her hand upon his chest. *Oh Max, if only...*

Lost in thought, she didn't realize the flame had touched the purified water and was extinguished. Bonnie and Alexis squeezed her hands. She smiled. The special bond they shared had helped her through many of life's crises.

"Well, I guess that's it." She dropped their hands and stood up.

"Now you only have to be patient and wait for a sign." Bonnie carried the bowl into the kitchen. "Then you can no longer doubt the Goddess."

Alexis stepped over to the window and peered outside. "I believe you won't have to wait too long before you find out the truth."

The phone rang. Carly screamed and covered her cheeks with her hand. *Oh my Goddess... Could this be the sign I asked for?*

She hurried over to the small end table, picked up the receiver, and sent a private blessing to those who helped her see the truth. *Please let this be Max.*

"Hello?" She gasped and sank against the wall. "Oh Max, I'm so glad you called."

CHAPTER FOUR

Carly ignored her sisters' laughter and shut the door to her childhood home. Closing her eyes, she let her head fall back and inhaled the fresh air. The elements in the air charged her body. Confident, happy, and secure in what was happening to her, she jogged across the street. *I know, Goddess. I know. I promise not to doubt you next time.*

Max met her at the door of the shop. "I'm so glad you came back." Ushering her inside, he then switched the OPEN sign to CLOSED and turned around to gather her in his arms. "I know this seems crazy, but I can't stop thinking about you...wanting you. I know that sounds like I'm throwing you a line." He ran his hand across his jaw. "I wish you could see inside my heart. You'd know for a fact that I'm being sincere."

She laid her hand on his arm. "I know. I have the same thoughts going through my head. My soul is screaming that you are the one for me."

"Will you stay here and talk to me...get to know me?" Max raised his brows. "Please?"

She nodded and led him by the hand back to where he kissed her this morning. A pleasurable shiver washed over her. The idea of being around living things that grew from Mother Earth and the heat from the man beside her pleased her more than anything ever had.

Turning into his arms, she lifted her face. "May I kiss you?"

"Sweetheart, you can do anything you want." He cupped her cheeks.

She stretched up onto her tiptoes and kissed him. Softly yet firmly, he coaxed her to open her mouth. Tiny sparks united in her womb as the tip of his tongue caressed her lips. His leg slipped between her thighs and pressed against her pussy, and she moaned. *Oh Goddess.*

Max leaned his head back and sucked in a lungful of air. "God, you have the sexiest mouth." He framed her face with her hands. "You are like an angel, with your light blue eyes and perfect body. I want you. Right here. Naked. I want your legs wrapped around me while you scream my name."

"Yes." She stepped back and pulled the sweatshirt off her body. "Oh Goddess, yes!"

Max moved the vases off her worktable, grinned, and ducked his head into the walk-in cooler where the delicate flowers were stored. She unzipped her jeans and laughed when he came out with his arms loaded with flowers.

"You wouldn't dare." She stepped out of her jeans and thong. "Do you know how much all those cost?"

"Oh, I do dare. These are my flowers, and what better way to enjoy them than to see you spread out on top of them, waiting for me to take you to a wonderful place where only the two of us exist." He opened the box of rose heads and sprinkled them over the table. Velvety soft, fragrant petals floated down and filled the area.

Carly forgot about having no clothes on and joined him in spreading out the most beautiful flowers. Their gazes locked over the table, and her nipples hardened. *This is my man. A gift from the Goddess.*

Max walked around the table. Carly turned, not wanting to stop looking at him. He stood a few feet away and slowly began to unbutton his shirt. Her breath caught, and she stepped forward with her hand out.

"Let me...please. I want to touch you so bad, my body shakes." She trailed her fingers down his hard chest to undo the rest of the buttons. Tugging the shirt out of his slacks, she moaned. He had a killer six-pack stomach and no hair on his chest.

Curious as to what lay under the rest of his clothes, she unbuckled his belt. Her hands shook not from nerves, but from the searing pleasure racing through her body.

Letting the back of her hand skim the front of his zipper, she swallowed. The heat from his engorged cock warmed her fingers and brought a flood of cream to her pussy. "Oh Goddess..."

Carly hurried to unzip his pants and tug them past his buttocks. Max kicked them off the rest of the way. After kneeling in front of him, she rubbed her hand on the hair at the base of his cock. Reaching up with her other hand, she cupped his shaven ball sac. She rolled his jewels in her palm, delighted at how soft that part of him could be when his rock-hard cock throbbed for her attention.

Max laid his hands on each side of her head. "These blonde curls drive me wild." He brought two handfuls of her hair to his dick and let the strands fall around the sensitive skin.

Unable to deny herself any longer, she leaned forward and ran the bulbous head of his cock over her lips. She licked the slit at the end and smiled when his hips thrust toward her mouth.

"Sweetheart." He lifted her up by the arms. "Let me help you onto the table." Spanning each side of her waist with his hands, he lifted her up on top of the flowers.

Carly lay back and spread her arms wide. Lying among and surrounded by so many wonderful gifts from Gaia seemed the perfect place to have sex with Max.

Max gently spread her legs. Her back arched at the slight touch against her skin. She widened her legs more. Never had one man ignited so many delightful feelings within her. *Mm...I must be dreaming.*

The warm caress of his tongue slid over her pussy and ended at her exposed clit. "Wonderful..." His breath blew across her moistened lower lips. Her pussy spasmed.

"Please, Max." She found the edge of the table and curled her fingers around the wood. "Oh... Oh..."

His tongue swirled around her nub, drawing it out of its hood. Her hips thrust against his face, begging for all his attention. A powerful urge to have him consume her body in every way drove her wild. She wanted his cock in her—*now*.

She grabbed a handful of his hair and tugged. "Max? I want... I need you inside of me."

"I got you, sweetheart." He climbed up onto the table and kissed his way up her stomach, then bestowed a few nibbles on the curve of

her breast before sucking the nipple into his mouth. She gasped. She was going to come, and she didn't want to do it without him buried deep inside her.

She pulled him away from her breast. "Now, Max. Make me yours."

The corner of his mouth lifted, and a dimple on his cheek came out. "Anything for you, sweetheart."

Kneeling between her legs, he placed the head of his cock at her entrance. He captured her lips and slid into her at the same time. She mewed, arching off the table to press her breasts against his naked torso. Every nerve stimulated by his body touching, rubbing, plunging—it was the most wonderful feeling in the world.

Carly wrapped her legs around his ass, linked her arms around his neck, and let him set the motion. She squealed and sucked the tip of his tongue. Every move stimulated her clit, driving her higher... reaching, grasping.

Max's pace sped up. Her body convulsed underneath him, out of control. Contractions exploded throughout her very core and spread out to each limb, encompassing her whole body.

"Max!" She gasped and rode her orgasm out, luxuriating in Max's hot spurts of cum shooting deep into her pussy.

He laid his forehead on the top of her head and shuddered. Carly panted, gathering her breath. "Oh Goddess, that was amazing. I never knew...never dreamed...it could be so wonderful."

"Aw, sweetheart." Max blew out his breath. "What we have together is beautiful, yes?"

Carly smiled. "I knew it would be like this from the moment I met you."

"You did?" Max rolled to his side, taking her with him.

She nodded.

The light above them flickered out and cast the room in darkness. Carly laughed, snuggled closer to Max, and laid her head on his chest.

"Without a doubt."

Biography

Multipublished author Abby Wood lives in the Pacific Northwest. A huge animal lover, she enjoys the many animals on her farm and the wild ones that roam the forest. In her free time, she loves to ride motorcycles, garden, go fishing and play tennis. She loves to write stories that allow readers to escape into a brand-new world.

You can find out more about Abby at www.authorabbywood.com, visit her Facebook page at www.facebook.com/AbbyWoodFanPage and follow her on Twitter at @MsAbbyWood.

Other Books in this series

Truth of Fire: Book 1

From the Water: Book 2

Summon the Wind: Book 3

Other Books by Abby Wood

Going Down at the Dock

Winning Off the Court

Tagging Her Lynx

Within the Circle Series

To Play or Obey